

NASA - LaRC MAY 1997 SAFETY NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF SAFETY AND FACILITY ASSURANCE, OSEMA

GENERAL OFFICE SAFETY

The hazards in some work environments are obvious: loud noise from heavy machinery or high powered cutting tools, toxic fumes and hazardous gases from hazardous chemicals. If you work in these types of environments, you usually know that some type of protective measures are called for. Hazards are less obvious in an office environment, but they can still lurk around every corner.

Modern offices are equipped with many types of equipment, tools and supplies. They help us get our job done and they can also be hazardous.

FIGHTING OFFICE SAFETY HAZARDS

"Sitting", is something we don't often think of as hazardous, yet it can easily strain lower back muscles.

To sit properly:

- * Keep your back straight.
- * Sit towards the back of the chair.
- * Keep your knees slightly higher than your hips.
- * Leave your feet flat on the floor (or on a foot rest).

"Typing and Word-processing", often put your arms in awkward, stressful positions.

To help reduce this problem:

- * Keep your forearms at 90-degree angles.
- * Adjust the height of your chair or the keyboard to make your position comfortable.

Office Machines are powered by electricity, and can cause both electrical shock as well as a fire hazard.

To work safely with them:

- * Know how to operate your equipment before you start.
- * Watch out for hazards like exposed wires, overloaded outlets and improper grounding.
- * Report hazards as soon as you spot them.

Moving Parts on machines, can grab loose materials around them. When working with this type of equipment don't wear:

- * Dangling jewelry
- * Loose sleeves
- * Scarves or ties that can easily get caught

Computers are everywhere, they make our jobs easier and faster. But they can also become a source of problems.

Eye Strain:

- * Look for symptoms like headaches and blurred vision.
- * Take mini-breaks and vary your routine to avoid eyestrain.

Glare:

- * Adjust the angle of your monitor screen.
- * Change the viewing distance.
- * Keep your screen free of dust.
- * Use an anti-glare screen filter.

Lighting:

- * Adjust room light levels so they are comfortable for your eyes.
- * Too much light will overpower a video monitor

Filing Cabinets:

- * Load cabinets from the bottom drawer up.
- * Don't overload top drawers.
- * Open only one drawer at a time.
- * Close drawers gently.
- * Never use excessive force on drawers that are stuck.

Good Housekeeping:

- * Put things away when not in use.
- * Don't overload shelves.
- * Look out for wet floors or loose carpeting, tiles or floor boards.
- * Wipe up spills as they occur.
- * Make sure all cords are put away.
- * Keep all of the chair legs on the floor.
- * Don't use chairs as ladders.
- * Be cautious of office doors.

Remember that an accident in the office can have the same unpleasant results as one on a factory floor. Know your environment, be careful, and think "Safety First" and you will be safe wherever you are.

BEWARE OF THE BROWN RECLUSE SPIDER

This is an awareness notice due to recent stings of the Brown Recluse Spider at LaRC.

The Brown Recluse Spider is native to the Midwest, however, it has spread to the eastern United States. The adults are about 1/4-1/2 inch in length. The body may be tan to dark brown, making it similar in appearance to many other spiders, but the pairs, and the familiar dark violin or fiddle-shaped mark on the top of the head. The "neck" of the fiddle points toward the rear of the

body. Brown Recluse Spiders are nocturnal in their feeding habits. Outdoors, they are most common under rocks, debris, wood piles, etc... Indoors, common hiding places are bathrooms, attics, cellars and storage areas. Problems most often occur when people are accidentally bitten by a recluse hiding in stored clothing, inside shoes/boots or cardboard cartons. The hands, underarms, lower abdomen and the ankles are the areas of the body most likely to be bitten.

A Brown Recluse bite may go unnoticed for 6-8 hours, before a reddening, swelling and blistering of the wound starts to appear. The occurrence of additional symptoms of a recluse bite will depend upon the amount of venom injected by the spider. A severe bite can produce a necrotic lesion (i.e., an area of dead skin tissue) that may require surgery. Although an antidote has been developed, it is not widely available and it appears to be most effective before the lesion develops. Prompt medical attention is critical to successful chemical or surgical treatment of the bite.

If you find one of these spiders, contact your facility coordinator at once!

SAFETY CLASSES OFFERED

Just a reminder that the following safety training classes are available to be presented for you at your safety meetings.

- Confined Spaces (permit required)
- Confined Space Awareness
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Ergonomics (Office or Industrial)
- Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)
- Heat Stress
- Cryogenics
- Chemical Safety (Chemical Refresher)
- General Office Safety

If you would like to setup a class, contact your supervisor and he can schedule by contacting Butch Jones at 4-8743.